CO 29001/PO34901  Politics and the Media

Summer Session 2, 2013

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Office Hours: by appt. before and after class
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Schedule (class times and day(s)): M/W: 6:15 p.m. – 9:15 p.m.
Room:  Campion 300

Boston College Mission Statement

Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual ideal of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a world view that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

Course Description

CO 29001/PO 34901  Politics and the Media: Power and Influence

An analysis of mass media’s impact on the workings of the American system. The media’s interaction and influence on political institutions, on the presidential selection process, on national and international events, on office holders, politicians, heads of state and the treatment of economic upheaval and violence are analyzed. Considers the media’s role in the coverage of war, especially in a terrorist world.
Course Objectives

- The student will understand that the media play a critical role in U.S. politics;
- The student will understand the continuously changing role of media technology;
- The student will be apply to more critically interact with media to discern its influence;
- The student will demonstrate knowledge relevant to the course and be able to apply this to other cultural settings;
- The student will be able to discuss the ethical and social impact of mass media in politics

Grading

Midterm: 40 points
Class Participation
And Attendance: 10 points
Final Exam: 50 points

Students are expected to be present for each class and to participate as appropriate. NO late exams will be permitted. NO grades of “Incomplete” will be given.

WCAS Grading System
The undergraduate grading system consists of twelve categories: A (4.00), A- (3.67), excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), B- (2.67), good; C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67), satisfactory; D+ (1.33), D (1.00), D- (.67), passing but unsatisfactory; F (.00), failure; I (.00), incomplete; F (.00), course dropped without notifying office; W (.00), official withdrawal from course. The graduate grading system is A (4.00), A- (3.67), Excellent; B+ (3.33), B (3.00), good; B- (2.67), C (2.00), passing but not for degree credit; F (.00), failure.

Grade Reports. All students are required to log into the web through Agora to access their semester grades. Students must utilize their BC username and password to log on. If your username or password is not known the HELP Desk located in the Campus Technology Resource Center (CTRC) in O’Neill Library will issue a new one. The CTRC requires a valid picture ID (a BC ID, driver’s license or passport) to obtain your password.

Required Readings:

- Alison Alexander and Jarice Hanson. Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Mass Media and Society (12th ed.)
- Robert W. McChesney. The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communications Policy in the Twenty-First Century
- Larry Sabato. Feeding Frenzy
- Daily reading of the New York Times and The Boston Globe
Recommended Readings:

David Halberstam. The Powers That Be

University Policies:

Written Work
Graduate and undergraduate students are expected to prepare professional, polished written work. Written materials must be typed in the format required by your instructor. Strive for a thorough, yet concise style. Cite literature appropriately, using APA, MLA, CLA format per instructors decision. Develop your thoughts fully, clearly, logically and specifically. Proofread all materials to ensure the use of proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling. You are encouraged to make use of campus resources for refining writing skills as needed [http://www.bc.edu/libraries/help/tutoring.html].

Scholarship and Academic Integrity
It is expected that students will produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to reference properly is plagiarism. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on examinations or assignments, and submitting the same paper or substantially similar papers to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student’s work.

Request for Accommodations
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Dr. Kathy Duggan (dugganka@bc.edu), Associate Director, Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities or AHD) or Dean Paulette Durrett, (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for students with disabilities, (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations. http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/libraries/help/tutoring/specialservices.html.

Attendance
Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all classes and to arrive by the beginning of and remain for the entire class period. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, it is the student’s obligation to inform the instructor of the conflict before the class meets. The student is still expected to meet all assignment deadlines. If a student knows that he or she will be absent on a particular day, the student is responsible for seeing the instructor beforehand to obtain the assignments for that day. If a student misses a class, he or she is responsible for making up the work by obtaining a classmate's notes and handouts and turning in any assignments due. Furthermore, many instructors give points for participation in class. If you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Types
of absences that are not typically excused include weddings, showers, vacations, birthday parties, graduations, etc. Additional assignments, penalties and correctives are at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. In all cases, students are expected to accept the decision of the instructor regarding attendance policies specific to the class.

Consistent with our commitment of creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing the fulfillment of their academic obligations. It is the responsibility of students to review course syllabi as soon as they are distributed and to consult the faculty member promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. If asked, the student should provide accurate information about the obligations entailed in the observance of that particular holiday. However, it is the responsibility of the student to complete any and all class requirements for days that are missed due to conflicts due to religious holidays.

There may be circumstances that necessitate a departure from this policy. Feel free to contact the WCAS at 617-552-3900 for consultation.

**Deadlines**
Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly.

[Add any specific policies you have about grading of late material.]

**Course Assignments (see attached syllabus)**
PLEASE READ THE SYLLABUS EVERY WEEK

What we are really going to be dealing with this semester is a series of questions -- questions because there are so many angles from which to look at the subject matter involved. For example, what do we mean when we speak of “freedom of the press,” “the public’s right to know,” “necessity of governmental secrecy,” “responsibility of the media,” etc? How far does freedom of the press go? The right to know what? Who determines what must be kept secret and for how long? Responsibility of the media to whom? These are just a few of the questions that spring from the initial questions. And how do we balance these with other concepts and rights, such as “the right to a fair trial”?

We are also going to attempt to determine what role the media has played and continues to play, in shaping American society (and how it in turn has been shaped and continues to be shaped, by that society). We will look at how the media has responded to events, how the media has affected events, and how these events might have affected the media. In short, we will be looking at relationships.

In a wider sense, we will be looking at communication between and among people, between people and governmental institutions, as well as looking at one of the channels of that communication, the institutionalized mass media. Communication need not of necessity involve the institutionalized mass media. Keeping that in mind is crucial, for again, many facets arise (e.g., what is the relationship between media communication and non-media communication? What impact does mass media communication have upon non-media communication and vice-versa, etc?) As long as complex social organization persists, the cluster of problems that we group under the headings “freedom of expression” and “freedom of the press” will continue to be of political relevance.

Any course on contemporary politics and the media must address the ever-increasing issues surrounding social media. How do social media interact with “traditional” media? What impact do social media have on the political process, both domestically and abroad?

Politics and the Media, then, will be an attempt to seek out questions (even if we find that answers are by no means easy or even obtainable), to view interaction and interrelationships, and to put all of this into an environmental context.

The basic course environment will be an interactive one – that is, while course materials will be presented in “lectures,” my expectation is that an ongoing dialogue will be the norm, rather than merely setting aside just a brief period of time at the end of class for “discussion.” We will also utilize, as appropriate, audio-visual materials to both illustrate points made and to generate class discussion.
REQUIRED READINGS:
- Alison Alexander and Jarice Hanson. Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Mass Media and Society (12th ed.)
- Robert W. McChesney. The Problem of the Media: U. S. Communications Policy in the Twenty-First Century
- Larry Sabato. Feeding Frenzy
- Daily reading of the New York Times and The Boston Globe (class discussions and exams will draw upon these sources as well as readings above)

Other readings, as appropriate, may be assigned as the semester goes on.

Recommended Readings: (each class of three hours will approximately correspond to three (3) hours of outside reading)

David Halberstam. The Powers That Be

Course Outline

**Topic I**  
Criticisms of Mass Media  
Functions of Mass Communication  
*June 24, 26*

**Readings:**  
Alexander and Hanson, Unit 3, “News and Politics,” issue 8  
McChesney, ch. 1, “Political Problems, Political Solutions”  
McChesney, ch. 2, “Understanding U. S. Journalism I: Corporate Control and Professionalism”  
McChesney, ch. 3, “Understanding U. S. Journalism II: Right Wing Criticism and Political Coverage”

**Topic II**  
Concepts of Communication  
*July 1, 3*

**Readings:**  
Alexander and Hanson, Unit 5, “Law and Policy,” all issues

**Topic III**  
Democratic Government and the Question of Freedom  
*July 8*  
Government Control of the Media in the U.S.

**Readings:**  
Alexander and Hanson, Unit 4, “Law and Policy”  
McChesney, ch. 6, “Media Policies and Media Reform”

**JULY 10: MIDTERM EXAM**
**Topic IV**  Political Campaigns, Public Opinion and the Mass Media  **July 15, 17**

**Readings:**
Alexander and Hanson, section on “Media and Politics”
Sabato. *Feeding Frenzy* (begin)

**Topic V**  Government Officeholders: “Institutionalized” Media versus  **Social Media**  **July 22**
Presidential Dominance and the Media
Presidential-Media Relationship
The Developing Image of the Presidency
Presidential Press Conferences
The Effect of the Media on Congressional-Executive Relations
Investigatory, Accusatory and Advocacy Journalism
Libel and Satire

**Readings:**
Sabato. *Feeding Frenzy* (complete)
Alexander and Hanson, Unit 3, “News and Politics,” issue 7

**Topic VI**  Media and the Socio-Cultural Environment  **July 24**
Media as Transmitters of Values
Media as Agents of Change – The Political Impact at Home and Abroad
Media Technology, The Internet and Political, Social and Economic Effects
Media and Violence in the U. S.

**Readings:**
Alexander and Hanson, Unit 1, “Media and Social Issues,” all issues; Issues’; Unit 2, “A Question of Content,” all issues
Alexander and Hanson, Unit 3, “News and Politics,” issue 9
McChesney, ch. 4, “The Age of Hyper Commercialism”
Alexander and Hanson, Unit 6, “Life in the Digital Age” all issues;

**Topic VII**  The Economics of Mass Media  **July 29**
Interest Groups, Public Opinion and the Media Business, Advertising and the Mass Media

**Readings:**
McChesney, ch. 5, “The Market Uber Alies”
Review all course readings
Alexander and Hanson, Unit 5, “Media Business”
**JULY 31: FINAL EXAM** (NO late exams; NO early exams – make your travel arrangements so that you are present for the final exam)

**Course Requirements:**
There will be a midterm and a final exam. Dates to be announced. Exams **MUST** be taken as scheduled; no make-up exams will be permitted. **NO** grades of “Incomplete” will be permitted.

**Grade Composition:**
- Attendance and Class Participation: 10 points
- Midterm Exam: 40 points
- Final Exam: 50 points

**Important Notes:**
- **Turn off all cell phones and pagers during class. NO texting, FaceBook, etc.**
- **Headphones, tape recorders and laptop computers are not permitted in class.**
- Not only do they provide too many temptations, but also they deprive you of learning the necessary skill of learning how to take hand-written notes. **If you cannot agree to this requirement please withdraw from the course.**

You are responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism (the use of the work of someone else without proper citation. **Plagiarism is a serious offense and will result in a failing grade for the entire course.**

**Academic Integrity Policy**
Cheating and plagiarism are very serious offenses and have severe consequences. In this course, plagiarism will result in failure for the ENTIRE course. The same goes for cheating on any of the exams or quizzes.

Cheating and plagiarism not only hurt your own learning experience, but also are disrespectful to your fellow classmates who completed their own work. They are also disrespectful of your professor, college and academe.

Class Decorum
- **NO** laptops are permitted in class; take notes by hand.
- All cell phones and pagers must be turned off and out of sight.
- **No** ipods.
- **No** text messaging, or emailing.
- Please arrive promptly to class.
- **No** tape recorders or laptops.

**If you cannot comply with these conditions please withdraw from the course.**